

[Mr. J.] The humming-bird of the California wood-pecker.

A-M [Mr. J.]
1878

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THE HUMMING-BIRD OF THE CALIFORNIA WATER-FALLS.
[CINCLUS MEXICANUS.]
BY
JOHN MUIR.

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THE HUMMING-BIRD OF THE CALIFORNIA WATER-FALLS. 545

By John Muir. Vol. 1. Water-falls of the Sierra Nevada.

THE HUMMING-BIRD OF THE CALIFORNIA WATER-FALLS.

58,428



WATER-OUZEL DIVING AND FEEDING.

THE water-falls of the Sierra Nevada are frequented by only one bird, the ouzel or water-thrush (*Cinclus Mexicanus*, Sw.). He is a singularly joyous and lovable little fellow, about the size of a robin, clad in a plain water-proof suit of a blackish, bluish gray, with a tinge of chocolate on the head and shoulders. In form he is about as smoothly

plump and compact as a pot-hole pebble; the flowing contour of his body being interrupted only by his strong feet and bill, and the crisp wing-tips, and up-slanted wrenish tail.

Among all the countless water-falls I have met in the course of eight years' explorations in the Sierra, whether in the icy Alps, or warm foot-hills, or in the profound Yose-

mitic cañons of the middle region, not one was found without its ouzel. No cañon is too cold for him, none too lonely, provided it be rich in white falling water. Find a fall, or cascade, or rushing rapid, anywhere upon a clear crystalline stream, and there you will surely find its complementary ouzel, flitting about in the spray, diving in foaming eddies, whirling like a leaf among beaten foam-bells; ever vigorous and enthusiastic, yet self-contained, and neither seeking nor shunning your company.

If disturbed while dipping about in the margin shallows, he either sets off with a rapid whir to some other feeding-ground up or down the stream, or alights on some half-submerged rock or snag out in the foaming current, and immediately begins to nod and courtesy like a wren, turning his head from side to side and performing many other odd dainty manners as if he had been trained at some bird dancing-school.

He is the mountain streams' own darling,—the humming-bird of blooming waters, loving rocky ripple-slopes and sheets of foam, as a bee loves flowers,—as a lark loves sunshine and meadows. Among all the mountain birds, none has cheered me so much in my lonely wanderings,—none so unfailingly. For winter and summer he sings, independent alike of sunshine and love; requiring no other inspiration than the stream on which he dwells. While water sings, so must he; in heat or cold, calm or storm, ever attuning his voice in sure accord; low in the drouth of summer and drouth of winter, but never silent.

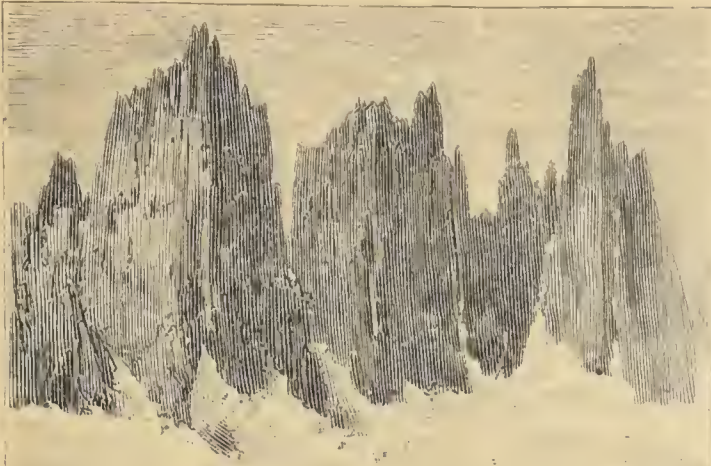
During the golden days of Indian summer the mountain streams are feeble,—a succession of silent pools, linked together with strips of silvery lace-work; then the song of the ouzel is at its lowest ebb. But as soon as the winter clouds have bloomed, and the mountain treasures are once more replenished with snow, the voices of the streams and ouzels begin to increase in strength and richness until the flood season of early summer. Then the glad torrents chant their noblest anthems, and then too is the flood-time of our songster's melody. But as to the influence of the weather, dark days and sun days are the same to him. The voices of most song-birds, however joyous, suffer a long winter eclipse; but the ouzel sings on around all the seasons, and through every kind of storm. Indeed no storm can be more violent than those of the water-falls in the midst of which he delights to dwell. At least, from whatever cause,

while the weather is darkest and most boisterous, snowing, blowing, cloudy or clear, all the same he sings, and never a note of sadness. No need of spring sunshine to thaw *his* song, for it never freezes. Never shall you hear anything wintry from *his* warm breast; no pinched cheeping, no wavering notes between sadness and joy; his mellow, fluty voice is ever tuned to downright gladness, as free from every trace of dejection as cock-crowing.

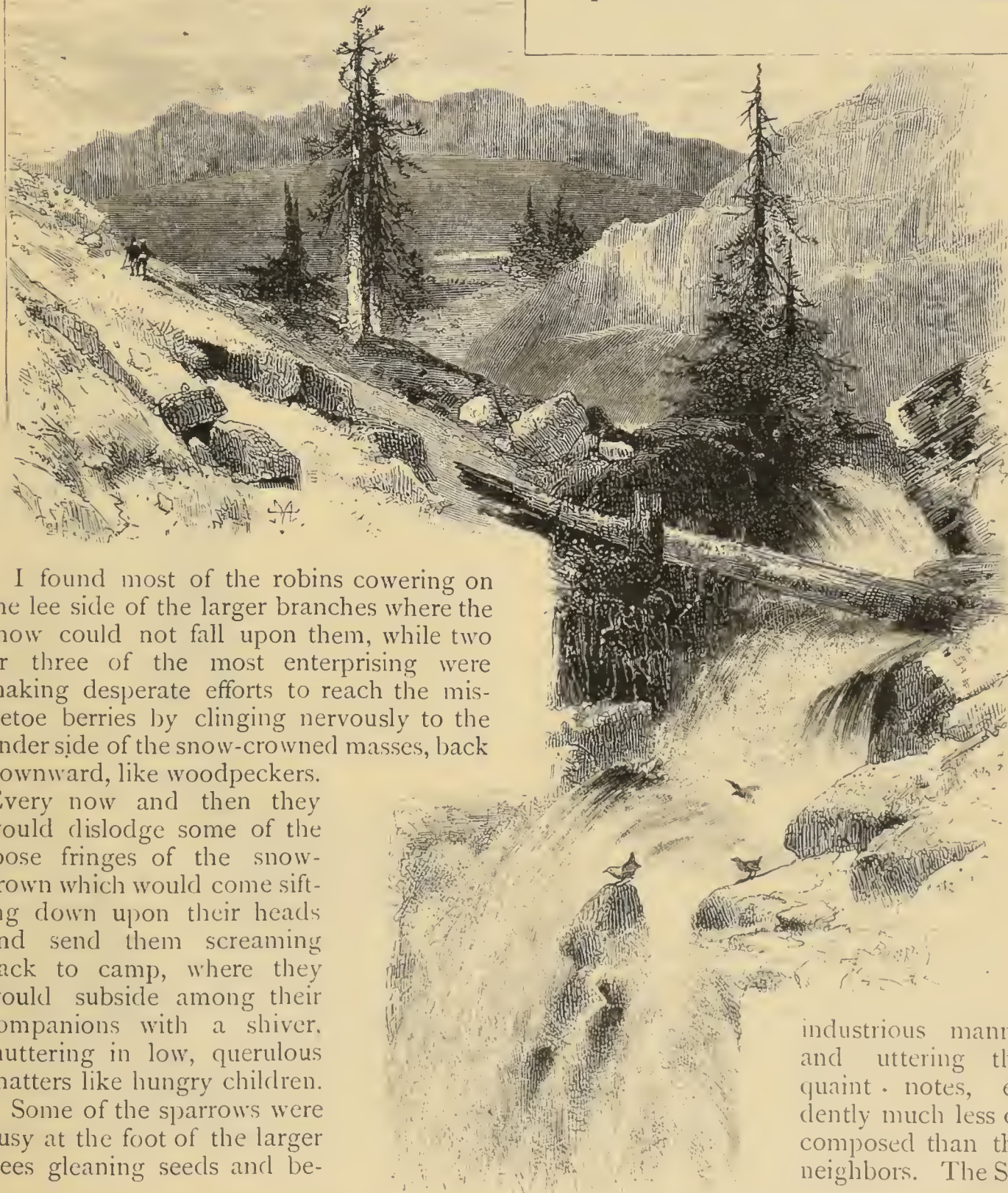
It is pitiful to see wee frost-pinched sparrows, on cold mornings, shaking the snow from their feathers, and hopping about as if anxious to be cheery, then hastening back to their hidings out of the wind, puffing out their breast feathers, and subsiding among the leaves, cold and breakfastless, while the snow continues to fall, and no sign of clearing. But the ouzel never calls forth a single touch of pity; not because he is strong to endure, but rather because he seems to live a charmed life beyond the reach of every influence that makes endurance necessary.

One wild winter morning, when Yosemite Valley was swept from west to east by a cordial snow-storm, I sallied forth to see what I might learn and enjoy. A sort of gray, gloaming-like darkness was kept up by the storm, and the loudest booming of the falls was at times buried beneath its sublime roar. The snow was already over five feet deep on the meadows, making very extended walks impossible without the aid of snow-shoes. I found no great difficulty, however, in making my way to a certain ripple on the river where one of my ouzels lived. He was at home as usual, gleaning his breakfast among the pebbles of a shallow portion of the margin, and apparently altogether unconscious of anything extraordinary in the weather. Presently he flew out to a stone against which the icy current was beating, and turning his back to the wind, sang delightfully as a lark in spring-time.

After spending an hour or two with my favorite, I went plodding through the drifts, to learn as definitely as possible how the other birds were spending their time. The Yosemite birds are easily found during the winter, because all excepting the ouzel are restricted to the sunny north side of the valley, the south side being constantly eclipsed by the great frosty shadow of the wall. And because the Indian Cañon groves from their peculiar exposure are the warmest, all the birds congregate there, more especially in severe weather.



numbed insects, joined now and then by a robin weary of his unsuccessful attempts upon the snow-covered berries. The brave woodpeckers were clinging to the snowless sides of the larger boles and overarching branches of the camp trees, making short flights from side to side of the grove, pecking and chattering aimlessly as if unable to keep still, yet evidently putting in the time in a very dull way, like storm-bound travelers at a country tavern. The hardy nut-hatches were threading the open furrows of the bark in their usual



I found most of the robins cowering on the lee side of the larger branches where the snow could not fall upon them, while two or three of the most enterprising were making desperate efforts to reach the mistletoe berries by clinging nervously to the under side of the snow-crowned masses, back downward, like woodpeckers. Every now and then they would dislodge some of the loose fringes of the snow-crown which would come sifting down upon their heads and send them screaming back to camp, where they would subside among their companions with a shiver, muttering in low, querulous chatters like hungry children.

Some of the sparrows were busy at the foot of the larger trees gleaning seeds and be-

industrious manner, and uttering their quaint notes, evidently much less discomposed than their neighbors. The Stel-

ler's jays were of course making more noisy stir than all the other birds combined; ever coming and going with loud bluster, screaming as if each had a lump of melting sludge in his throat, and taking very good care to improve the favorable opportunity afforded by the storm to steal from the acorn stores of the woodpeckers. I also noticed one solitary gray eagle braving the storm on the top of a tall pine stump just outside the main grove: He was standing bolt upright with his back to the wind, and with a tuft of snow piled on his square shoulders, the very type of passive endurance. Thus every snow-bound bird seemed more or less uncomfortable if not in positive distress. The storm was reflected in every gesture, and not one cheerful note, not to say song, came from a single bill; their cowering, joyless endurance offering a most striking contrast to the spontaneous, irrepressible gladness of the ouzel, who could no more help exhaling sweet song, than a rose sweet fragrance. He *must* sing if the heavens fall. I remember noticing the distress of a pair of robins during the violent earthquake of the year 1872, when the pines of the valley, with strange movements, flapped and waved their branches, and beetling rock-brows came thundering to the meadows in fiery avalanches. It did not occur to me in the midst of the excitement of other observations to look for the ouzels, but I doubt not they were singing straight on through it all, regarding its terrible thunders as fearlessly as they do the booming of the water-falls.

What may be regarded as the separate songs of the ouzel are exceedingly difficult of description, because they are so variable and at the same time so confluent. I have been acquainted with my favorite for eight years, and though, during most of this time I have heard him sing nearly every day, I still detect notes and strains that are quite new to me. Nearly all of his music is very sweet and tender, lapsing from his round breast like water over the smooth lip of a pool, then breaking farther on into a rich sparkling foam of melodious notes, which glow with subdued enthusiasm, yet without expressing much of the strong, gushing ecstasy of the bobolink or sky-lark.

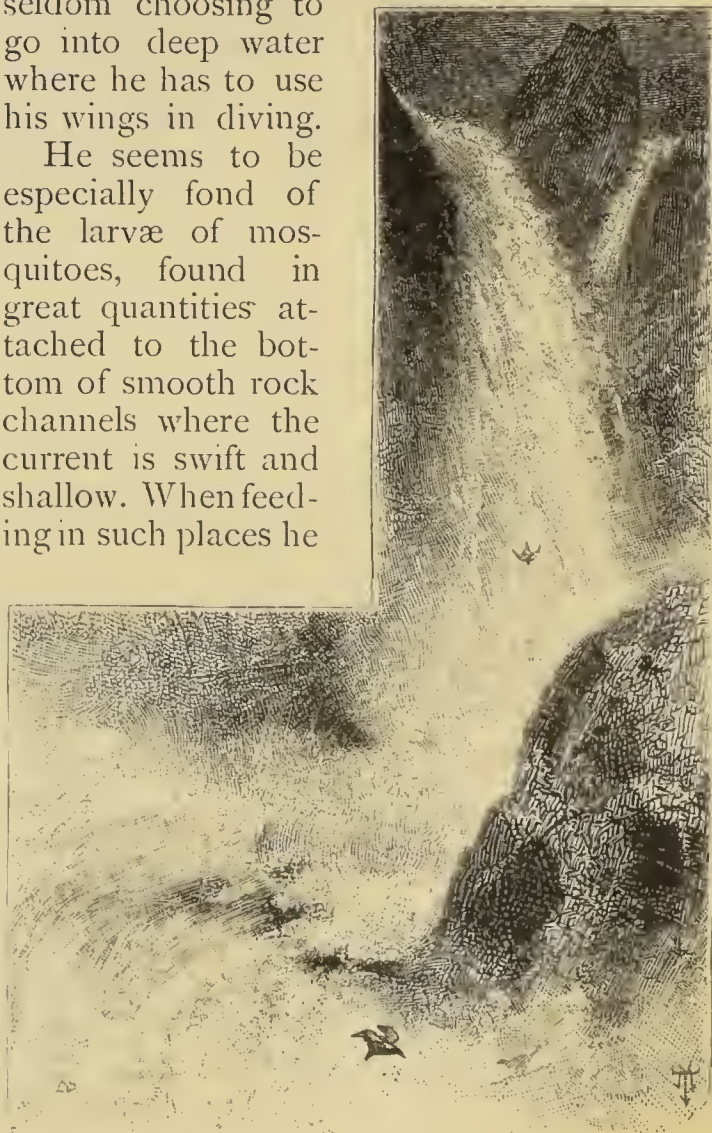
The more striking strains are perfect arabesques of melody, composed of a few full, round, mellow notes, embroidered with a great variety of delicate trills which fade in long slender cadences like the silken fringes of summer clouds melting in the

azure. But as a whole, his music is that of the stream itself, infinitely—organized, spiritualized. The deep booming notes of the falls are in it, the trills of rapids, the swirling and gurgling of pot-holes, low hushes of levels, the rapturous bounce and dance of rocky cascades, and the sweet tinkle of separate drops oozing from the ends of mosses and falling into tranquil pools.

The ouzel never sings in chorus with other birds, nor with his kind, but only with the streams. And like flowers that bloom beneath the surface of the ground, some of our favorite's best song-blossoms never rise above the surface of the heavier music of the water. I have oftentimes observed him singing in the midst of beaten spray, his music completely buried beneath the water's roar; yet I knew he was surely singing by the movements of his bill.

His food consists of all kinds of water insects, which in summer are chiefly procured along shallow margins. Here he wades about ducking his head under water, and deftly turning over pebbles and fallen leaves with his bill, seldom choosing to go into deep water where he has to use his wings in diving.

He seems to be especially fond of the larvæ of mosquitoes, found in great quantities attached to the bottom of smooth rock channels where the current is swift and shallow. When feeding in such places he



OUZEL ENTERING A WHITE CURRENT.

wades up-stream, and oftentimes while his head is under water the swift current is deflected upward along the glossy curves of his neck and shoulders, in the form of a clear, crystalline shell, which fairly incloses him like a bell-glass, the shell being constantly broken and re-formed as he lifts and dips his head; while ever and anon he sidles out to where the too powerful current carries him off his feet, and sweeps him rapidly down-stream; then he dexterously rises on the wing and goes gleaning again in shallower places.

But during the winter, when the stream-banks are all deeply embossed in snow, and the streams themselves are chilled nearly to the freezing point, so that the snow falling into them in stormy weather is not wholly dissolved, but forms a thin blue sludge, thus rendering the current opaque—then he seeks the deeper portions of the main rivers, where he may dive to clear portions of the channel beneath the sludge. Or he repairs to some open lake or mill-pond, at the bottom of which he feeds in perfect safety.

When thus compelled to betake himself to a lake, he does not plunge into it at once like a duck, but always alights in the first place upon some rock or fallen pine along the shore, then flying out thirty or forty yards, more or less, according to the character of the bottom, he alights with a dainty glint on the surface, swims about, looks down, finally makes up his mind and disappears with a sharp stroke of his wings. After feeding for two or three minutes he suddenly re-appears, showers the water from his wings with one vigorous shake, and rises abruptly into the air as if pushed up from beneath, comes back to his perch, sings a few minutes and goes out to dive again; thus coming and going, singing and diving at the same places for hours.

I once observed three thus spending a winter morning in company, upon a small glacier lake, on the Upper Merced, about 7,500 feet above the level of the sea.

A storm had occurred during the night, but the morning sun shone unclouded, and the shadowy lake, gleaming darkly in its setting of fresh snow, lay smooth and motionless as a mirror.

My camp chanced to be within a few feet of the water's edge, opposite a fallen pine, some of the branches of which leaned out over the lake. Here my three dearly welcome visitors took up their station, and at once began to embroider the frosty

air with their delicious melody, doubly delightful to me that particular morning, as I had been somewhat apprehensive of danger in breaking my way down to the lowlands.

The portion of the lake bottom selected for a feeding-ground lies at a depth of fifteen or twenty feet below the surface, and is covered with a short growth of algæ and other aquatic plants,—facts I chanced to be able to determine by having previously floated over it on a raft and made soundings.

After alighting on the glassy surface, the birds would occasionally indulge in a little play, chasing each other round about in small circles; then all three would suddenly dive together, and come ashore and sing. They are usually found singly, however, rarely in pairs excepting during the breeding season, and *very* rarely in threes or fours.

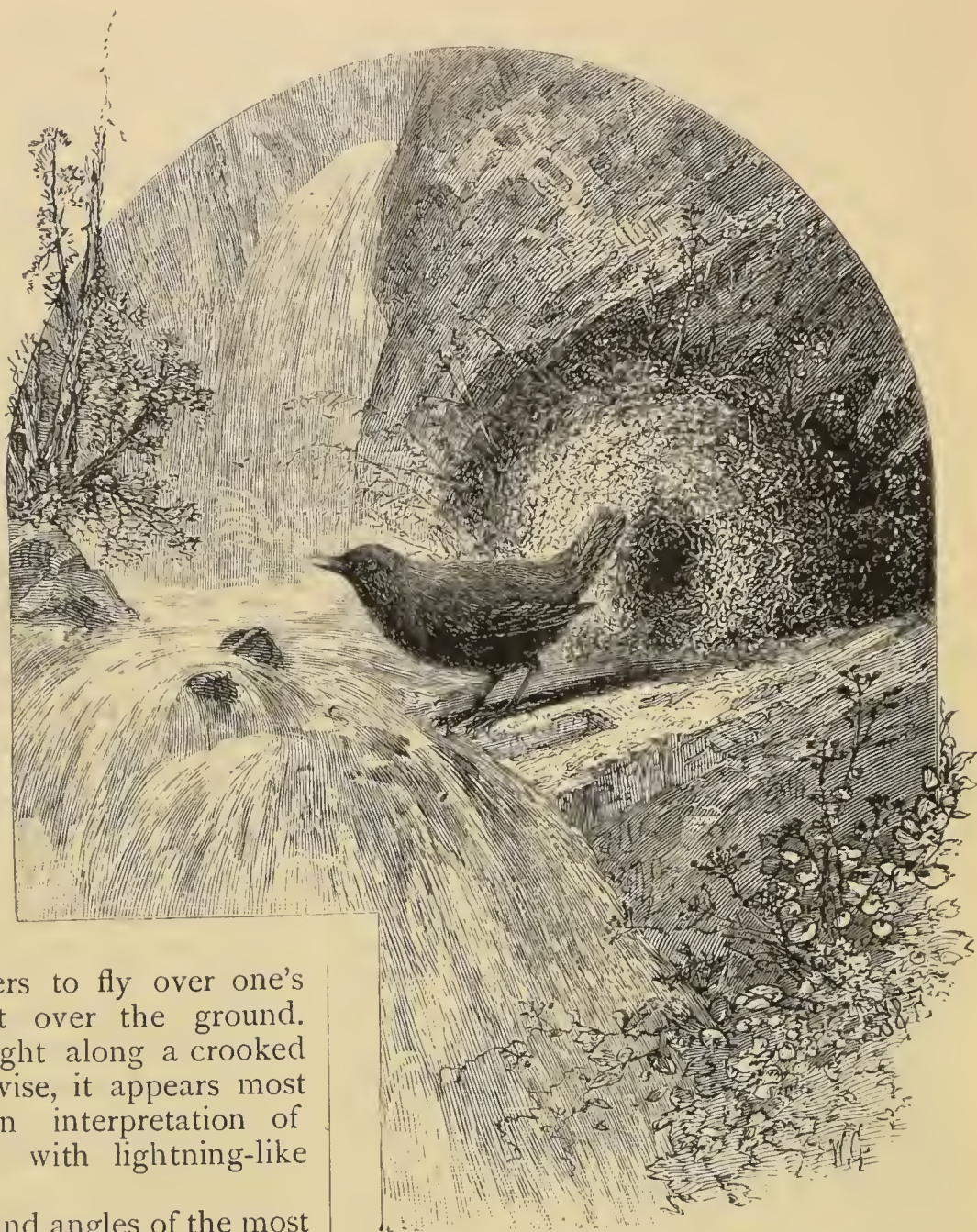
They seldom swim more than a few yards on the surface, for, not being web-footed, they make rather slow progress, but by means of their strong, crisp wings they swim, or rather fly, with great celerity under the surface, often to considerable distances.

But it is in withstanding the force of rushing torrents that their strength of wing in this respect is most strikingly manifested. The following may be regarded as a fair illustration of their easy, unconscious powers of sub-aquatic flight. One winter morning, when the Merced River was blue and green with unmelted snow, I observed one of my ouzels perched on a snag out in the midst of a swift rushing rapid. He sang cheerily, as if everything was just to his mind, and while I stood on the bank admiring him, he suddenly plunged into the sludgy current, leaving his song broken abruptly off. After feeding a minute or two at the bottom, and when one would suppose he must inevitably be swept far down-stream, he emerged just where he went down, alighted on the same snag, showered the water beads from his feathers, and at once continued his unfinished song, splicing it together as if it had suffered no interruption.

The ouzel alone of all birds dares to enter a white torrent. And though strictly terrestrial in structure, no other is so inseparably related to water, not even the duck, or bold ocean albatross, or storm-petrel. Ducks go ashore when they have done feeding in undisturbed places, and frequently make long overland flights from lake to lake or from field

to field. The same is true of most other aquatic birds. But our ouzel, born on the very brink of a stream, seldom leaves it for a single moment. For, notwithstanding he is often on the wing, he never flies overland, but whirs with rapid, quail-like beat above the stream, tracing all its winding modulations with great minuteness. Even when the stream is quite small, say from five to ten feet wide, he will not try to shorten his flight by crossing a bend, however abrupt it may be; and even when disturbed by meeting some one on the bank, he prefers to fly over one's head, to dodging out over the ground. When therefore his flight along a crooked stream is viewed endwise, it appears most strikingly wavered—an interpretation of every curve inscribed with lightning-like rapidity on the air.

The vertical curves and angles of the most precipitous Alpine torrents he traces with the same rigid fidelity. Swooping adown the inclines of cascades, dropping sheer over dizzy falls amid the spray, and ascending with the same fearlessness and ease, seldom seeking to lessen the steepness of the acclivity by beginning to ascend before reaching the base of the fall. No matter how high it may be, he holds straight on as if about to dash headlong into the throng of booming rockets, then darts abruptly upward, and, after alighting at the top of the precipice to rest a moment, proceeds to feed and sing. His flight is solid and impetuous without any intermission of wing-beats,—one homogeneous buzz like that of a laden bee on its way home. And while thus buzzing freely from fall to fall, he is frequently heard giving utterance to a long outdrawn train of unmodulated notes, in no way connected with his song, but corresponding closely with his flight, both in sustained vigor, and homogeneity of substance.



THE OUZEL AT HOME.

Were the flights of every individual ouzel in the Sierra traced on a chart, they would indicate the direction of the flow of the entire system of ancient glaciers, from about the period of the breaking up of the ice-sheet until near the close of the glacial winter; because the streams which the ouzels so rigidly follow, are, with the unimportant exceptions of a few side tributaries, all flowing in channels eroded for them out of the solid flank of the range by the vanished glaciers,—the streams tracing the glaciers, the ouzels tracing the streams. Nor do we find so complete compliance to glacial conditions in the life of any other mountain bird, or animal of any kind. Bears frequently accept the path-ways laid down by glaciers as the easiest to travel; but then, they often leave them and cross over from cañon to cañon. So also, most birds found in rocky cañons at all usually fly across at right angles to the courses of

the vanished glaciers, because the main forests of these regions to which they come and go are growing upon the lateral moraines which always stretch along the tops of the cañon walls.

The ouzel's nest is one of the most extraordinary pieces of bird architecture I ever beheld; so odd and novel in design, and so perfectly fresh and beautiful, and in every way so fully worthy of the genius of the little builder. It is about a foot in diameter, round and bossy in outline, with a neatly arched opening near the bottom, somewhat like an old-fashioned brick oven, or Hottentot's hut. It is built almost exclusively of green and yellow mosses, chiefly the beautiful fronded hypnum that covers the rocks and old drift-logs in the vicinity of water-falls. These are deftly interwoven, and felted together into a charming little hut; and so situated that many of the outer mosses continue to flourish as if they had not been plucked. A few fine silky-stemmed grasses are occasionally found interwoven with the mosses, but, with the exception of a thin layer lining the floor, their presence seems accidental, as they are of a species found growing with the mosses and are probably plucked with them. The site chosen for this curious mansion is usually some little rock-shelf within reach of the spray of a water-fall, so that its walls are kept green and growing, at least during the time of high water.

No harsh lines are presented by any portion of the nest as seen *in situ*, but when removed from its shelf, the back and bottom, and sometimes a portion of the top, is found quite sharply angular because it is made to conform to the surface of the rock, upon which and against which it is built; the little architect always taking advantage of slight crevices and protuberances that may chance to offer, to render his structure stable, by means of a kind of gripping and dovetailing.

In choosing a building spot, concealment does not seem to be taken into consideration at all; yet notwithstanding the nest is so large, and so guilelessly exposed to view, it is far from being easily detected, chiefly because it swells forward like any other bulging moss-cushion growing naturally in such situations. This is more especially the case where the nest is kept fresh by being well sprinkled. Sometimes these romantic little huts have their beauty enhanced by tasteful decorations of rock-ferns and grasses, that spring up around

the walls or in front of the door-sill, all dripping with crystal beads.

Furthermore, at certain hours of the day when the sunshine is poured down at the required angle, the whole mass of the spray enveloping the fairy establishment is brilliantly irised; and it is through so glorious a rainbow atmosphere as this that some of our blessed ouzels obtain their first peep at the world.

Ouzels seem so completely part and parcel of the streams they inhabit, they scarce suggest any other origin than the streams themselves; and one might almost be pardoned in fancying they come direct from the living waters like flowers from the ground,—a kind of winged water-lily. At least, from whatever cause, it never occurred to me to look for their nests until more than a year after I had made the acquaintance of the birds themselves, although I found one the very day on which I began the search. In making my way from Yosemite to the glaciers of the adjacent Alps, I camped in a particularly wild and romantic portion of the Nevada cañon where in previous excursions I had never once failed to enjoy the delightful company of my favorites, who were attracted here, no doubt, by the extraordinary abundance of white water. The river, for miles above and below, consists of a succession of small falls from ten to sixty feet in height, connected by flat, plume-like cascades that go flashing from fall to fall, free and channelless, over waving folds of glacier polished granite.

On the south side of one of the falls, that portion of the precipice which is bathed by the spray presents a series of little shelves and tablets caused by the development of planes of cleavage in the granite, and the consequent fall of masses through the action of the water. "Now *here*," said I, "of all places, is the most charming spot for an ouzel's nest." Then carefully scanning the fretted face of the precipice through the spray, I at length noticed a large, yellowish moss-cushion, growing on the edge of a level tablet within five or six feet of the outer folds of the fall. But apart from the fact of its being situated exactly where one acquainted with the lives of ouzels would fancy an ouzel's nest ought to be, there was nothing in its appearance visible at first sight, to distinguish it from other bosses of rock-moss, similarly situated with reference to perennial spray; and it was not until I had scrutinized it again and again, and had removed my

shoes and stockings and crept along the face of the rock within eight or ten feet of it, that I could decide certainly whether

sing water songs, for they hear them all their lives, and even before they are born.

I have oftentimes observed the young



YOSEMITE BIRDS, SNOW-BOUND AT THE FOOT OF INDIAN CAÑON.

it was the nest I was so eagerly seeking or a natural growth.

In these moss huts are laid, three or four eggs,—white, like foam bubbles; and well may the little ouzels hatched from them

just out of the nest making their odd gestures, and seeming in every way as much at home as their experienced parents,—like young bees in their first excursions to the flower fields. No amount of familiarity

with people and their ways seems to change them in the least. To all appearance their behavior is just the same on seeing a man for the first time, as when seeing him every day.

On the lower reaches of the rivers where mills are built, they sing on through the din of the machinery, and all the concomitant confusion of dogs, cattle, and workmen. On one occasion, while a wood-chopper was at work on the river-bank, I observed one cheerily singing within reach of the flying chips. Nor does any kind of unwonted disturbance put him in bad humor, or frighten him out of calm self-possession. In passing through a narrow gorge, I drove one ahead of me from rapid to rapid, disturbing him four times in quick succession, where he could not very well fly past me on account of the narrowness of the channel. Most birds under similar circumstances fancy themselves pursued, and become suspiciously uneasy; but, instead of growing nervous about it, he made his usual dippings, and sang one of his most tranquil strains. When observed within a few yards their eyes are seen to express remarkable gentleness and intelligence; but they seldom allow a sufficiently near approach. On one occasion, while rambling along the shore of a mountain lake, where the birds, at least those born that season, had never seen a man, I sat down to rest upon a large stone close to the water's edge, upon which it seemed the ouzels and sandpipers were in the habit of alighting when they came to feed on that part of the shore, and some of the other birds also, when they came down to wash or drink. After I had sat a few minutes, along came a whirring ouzel and alighted on the stone beside me, within reach of my hand. Then observing me, all at once he stooped nervously as if about to fly on the instant, but as I remained motionless as the stone, he gained confidence, and looked me steadily in the face for about a minute, then flew quietly to the outlet and began to sing. A sandpiper came next and gazed at me with much the same guileless expression of eye as the ouzel. Lastly, down with a swoop came a Steller's jay out of a fir-tree, probably with the intention of moistening his noisy throat. But instead of sitting confidingly as my other visitors had done, he rushed off at once, nearly tumbling heels over head into the lake in his suspicious confusion, and with loud screams roused the neighborhood.

Love for song-birds, with their sweet hu-

man voices, appears to be far more universal and unailing than love for flowers. Everyone loves flowers, to some extent at least in life's fresh morning, attracted by them as instinctively as humming-birds and bees. Even the young Digger Indians have sufficient love for the brightest of those found growing on the mountains to gather them and braid them as decorations for the hair. And I was glad to discover, through the few Indians that could be induced to talk on the subject, that they have names for the wild rose and the lily, and other conspicuous flowers, whether available as food or otherwise. Most men, however, whether savage or civilized, become apathetic toward all plants that have no other apparent use than the use of beauty. But fortunately one's first instinctive love of song-birds is never wholly obliterated, no matter what the influences upon our lives may be. I have often been delighted to see a pure, spiritual glow come into the countenances of hard business men, and dissipated old miners, when a song-bird chanced to alight near them. Nevertheless, the little mouthful of meat that swells out the breasts of some song-birds is too often the cause of their death. Larks and robins in particular are brought to market in hundreds. But fortunately the ouzel has no enemy so eager for his little body as to follow him into the mountain solitudes. I never even knew him to be chased by hawks.

An acquaintance of mine, a sort of foot-hill mountaineer, had a pet cat, a great, dozy, overgrown creature, about as broad-shouldered as a lynx. During the winter while the snow lay deep, the mountaineer sat in his lonely cabin among the pines, smoking his pipe, and wearing the dull time away. Tom was his sole companion, sharing his bed, and sitting beside him on a stool, with much the same drowsy expression of eye as his master.

The good-natured bachelor was content with his hard fare of soda bread and bacon, but Tom, the only creature in the world acknowledging dependence on him, must needs be provided with fresh meat. Accordingly, he bestirred himself to contrive squirrel traps, and waded the snowy woods with his gun, making sad havoc among the few winter birds, sparing neither robin, sparrow, nor tiny nut-hatch, and the pleasure of seeing Tom eat them was his great reward.

One cold afternoon, while hunting along the river-bank he noticed a plain-feathered

little bird skipping about in the shallows, and immediately raised his gun. But just then the confiding little songster began to sing, and after listening to his rare summery melody, he turned away, saying, "Bless your little heart, I can't shoot *you*, not even for Tom."

The species is distributed all along the mountain ranges of the Pacific coast from Alaska to Mexico, and east to the Rocky Mountains. Nevertheless, it is as yet but little known, even among naturalists. Audubon and Wilson did not meet it at all. Swainson was, I believe, the first to describe a specimen from Mexico. Specimens were shortly afterward procured by Drummond near the sources of the Athabasca River, between the fifty-fourth and fifth-sixth parallels; and it has been collected by

nearly all of the numerous exploring expeditions undertaken of late through our western states and territories; for it never fails to engage the attention of naturalists in a very particular manner.

Such, then, is the life of our little cinclus, beloved of every one who is so happy as to know him. Tracing on strong wing every curve of the most precipitous torrent, from one extremity of the Californian Alps to the other; not fearing to follow them through their darkest gorges, and coldest snow-tunnels; acquainted with every waterfall, echoing their divine music; and throughout the whole of their beautiful lives interpreting all that we in our unbelief call terrible in the utterances of torrents, as only varied expressions of God's eternal love.

TWENTY-SIX HOURS A DAY.

I.—HOW TO GET THEM.

"WELL," exclaims tired Mrs. Motherly, "if anybody needs twenty-six hours a day, I am sure I do, and ten days a week into the bargain. The days are not half long enough, and when night comes, the thought of the things I ought to have done but couldn't, tires me more than all I have done. This very day, when I expected to do so much sewing, has slipped away, while I have trotted around after the children, washing faces, brushing tangled hair, putting on rubber boots and taking them off again in fifteen minutes, and picking up blocks and playthings, scarfs and mittens over and over again. I have mended unexpected tears in jackets and dresses, put court-plaster on 'skatched finders,' settled twenty quarrels between the baby and the next older, threaded needles for 'make-believe sewings,' and all the time been trying to sew, or dust, or sweep, or make gingerbread, till I feel as if I were in a dozen pieces, and every piece trying to do something different. At night I am so tired that all I ask for is a place to crawl into and sleep if I can, and even that must be with one eye open to see that the baby doesn't get uncovered. Yet there *are* people so unfeeling as to say I ought to try to get time to read and all that!"

Not so fast, my little mother. It is all true, every word of it, but let us see if it isn't

possible to save a little time out of even these busy, wearying days for something higher than mere physical needs.

In order to find out how to save it, let us see what we do with it. Suppose we sort over our work as we do our work-baskets, and see if we cannot make a little time by saving it.

The first and most important of our duties is the care of the children, including, of course, their physical, moral and intellectual training.

Next comes the housekeeping, *i. e.*, the literal keeping the house in order, looking after its cleanliness and general pleasantness.

Then, cooking or preparing and serving the food, including the care of the table and all that pertains to it. This is really another part of the housekeeping, and perhaps ought to be included in it, except that in some households the details are given over entirely to servants, while in others they are in greater or less degree the work of the lady of the house.

And lastly, the sewing.

As regards the care of the children it is almost impossible that there can be any superfluities. To every true mother, their welfare is first and foremost. Better that cobwebs festoon our parlor-walls, and dust lie inch deep on our books, than that

PAT. JAN. 21, 1908

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